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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8263

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 4292

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, SWEL, HO
SUBJECT: LABOFF DISCUSSION WITH SUTRAFSCO (STANDARD FRUIT WORKERS' UNION) LEADERS

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 4291

1. WHILE ACCOMPANYING THE AMBASSADOR AND ARA/CEN DEPUTY DIRECTOR KILDAY ON VISIT TO NORTH COAST DISASTER AREA, LABOFF DISCUSSED RECENTT SITUATION WITH SUTRAFSCO PRESIDENT NAPOLEON ACEVADO. ECONOMIC ADVISOR CARLOS H. REYES (FROM BEER AND SOFT DRINK WORKERS' UNION) AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SUTRAFSCO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

2. THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ARE FRUSTRATED AND ANGRY DUE TO THEIR INABILITY TO DISTRIBUTE RELIEF SUPPLIES TO THEIR AFFILIATES. THEY CLAIM TO HAVE RECEIVED GOODS FROM COPEN (PERMANENT NATIONAL EMERGENCY COMMITTEE) WHICH WERE DIVERTED BY THE COMPANY FOR OTHER PURPOSES. ACEVEDO AND THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL READ A SINISTER PURPOSE IN A SERIES OF COMPANY ACTIONS AND ARE NOT WILLING TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF ADMINISTRATIVE ERROR. THEY VIEW THE COMPANY'S ACTIONS AS PART OF A PLOY TO WEAKEN THE UNION POLITICALLY.

3. ACEVEDO REQUESTED DIRECT INTERCESSION WITH THE COMPANY ON THE PART OF THE AMBASSADOR TO END INTERFERENCE WITH THE UNION'S RELIEF EFFORT AND ASKED THAT THE U.S. DIVERT SOME AID FROM COPEN AND PROVIDE IT DIRECTLY TO THE UNIONS. SINCE
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SUTRAFSCO HAD NOT DISCUSSED THEIR PROBLEM WITH THE COMPANY

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LABOFF SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE FOR THE AMBASSADOR TO TAKE THEIR CASE TO MANAGEMENT AND THAT THEY SHOULD TRY TO WORK OUT AN ACCOMODATION BILATERALLY. AS FOR DIRECT U.S. AID TO UNIONS LABOFF NOTED THAT U.S. AID MUST BE DIRECTED THROUGH THE GOH AND SUGGESTED THAT THE LABOR MOVEMENT USE ITS CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE TO MAKE ITS OWN ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE GOH FOR ACCESS TO RELIF SUPPLIES.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SUTRAFSCO'S PROBLEMS ARE UNIQUE IN SOME WAYS, THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL'S HIGH LEVEL OF FRUSTRATION IS TYPICAL OF UNION LEADERSHIP ON THE NORTH COAST BECAUSE OF A GENERAL FAILURE TO BECOME MEANINGFULLY INVOLVED IN PROVIDING EMERGENCY RELIEF TO AFFILIATES. SUTRAFSCO'S VIEW OF AN ANTI-UNION ACTION ON THE PART OF STANDARD FRUIT RESULTS FROM YEARS OF POOR RELATIONS BETWEEN THE COMPANY AND THE UNION. THE LATTER IS INCLINED TO VIEW ALMOST ANY ACTION ON THE PART OF THE COMPANY AS BEING PART OF A PLOT TO DESTROY THE UNION. NEVERTHELESS, THE GENERAL INABILITY OF THE UNIONS, IN SPITE OF GREAT EFFORTS TO THE CONTRARY, DOES CREATE A GENUINE FRUSTRATION WHICH COULD HAVE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES IF TOO LONG SUSTAINED.

5. AT THIS POINT THE NORTH COAST LABOR MOVEMENT, UNITED IN THE FESITRANH FEDERATION, HAS NOT CHOSEN TO ATTEMPT A UNITED APPEAL TO CHIEF OF STATE LOPEZ. THE LEADERSHIP OF EACH UNION IS GENERALLY ENGAGED IN SOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF ITS OWN UNION AND THERE HAS BEEN NO MOVE TO TREAT THE CRISIS FROM A BROADER PERSPECTIVE. CELEO GONZALLEZ, FESITRANH PRESIDENT, IS SPENDING THE GREATEST SHARE OF HIS EFFORTS IN CLEANING UP THE FESITRANH HOUSING PROJECT RATHER THAN TRYING TO RALLY HIS FEDERATION'S UNIONS INTO A POLITICAL FORCE TO PETITION THE GOH FOR ACTION ON THEIR ONE COMMON PROBLEM; THE EXCLUSION OF THE UNIONS FROM PARTICIPATION IN THE RELIEF EFFORT. SEE REFTEL FOR DESCRIPTION OF AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATION WITH STANDARD FRUIT OFFICIALS AND SUTRAFSCO LEADERS.
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